

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9987

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINGSTON 0329

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EFIN, JM

SUBJECT: MINISTER OF MARKETING AND COMMERCE BLAKE COMMENTS

ON PRESENT JAMAICAN ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL

SITUATION

1. DURING CALL BY AMBASSADOR AND ECONOFF TO DISCUSS RICE ISSUE (SEPTTEL) MINISTER OF MARKETING AND COMMERCE BLAKE DISCUSSED THE PRESENT JAMAICAN SITUATION. HE SAID THAT THE COUNTRY WAS GOING THROUGH A VERY DIFFICULT PERIOD AND THAT IT WAS PERHAPS UNFORTUNATE THAT PRESENT CABINET MEETING WAS CALLED A "RETREAT". (FYI MEETING SCHEDULED TO TERMINATE WEDNESDAY BUT RESUMES AGAIN TODAY (FRIDAY) SINCE A NUMBER OF ISSUES STILL UNRESOLVED.) IN RESPONSE TO THE AMBASSADOR'S QUERY CONCERNING THE NEXT ELECTION, BLAKE DID NOT REPLY DIRECTLY BUT STATED THAT UNDER THE PRESENT REGULATIONS A PARTY COULD WIN AS MUCH AS 52 - 54 PERCENT OF THE POPULAR VOTE AND STILL NOT HAVE A WORKABLE MAJORITY IN PARLIAMENT. ACCORDING TO BLAKE, REVISION OF CONSTITUENT BOUNDARIES NOT POSSIBLE BEFORE NOVEMBER WHEN MANDATORY 4-YEAR PERIOD EXPIRES SINCE PREVIOUS BOUNDARIES DRAWN.

2. BLAKE SAID THE CABINET WAS GIVING SERIOUS CONSIDERA-
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TION TO THE PRESENT DIFFICULT JAMAICAN FINANCIAL SITUATION.

HE SAID AN IMF TEAM HAD RECENTLY VISITED JAMAICA TO REVIEW ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE. SOME OF THEIR PROPOSALS ARE APPARENTLY UNDER CONSIDERATION, AND BLAKE SAID ONE OF THE PROBLEMS WAS HOW TO IMPLEMENT AN EFFECTIVE INCOMES POLICY. HE SAID THE PM HAD BELATEDLY RECOGNIZED THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE LOCAL SITUATION, AND IN HIS RECENT PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS HAD BEEN TRYING TO RETREAT FROM POSITION THAT JLP SOLELY TO BLAME, I.E., PNP EQUALLY AT FAULT.

3. BLAKE SAID TWO MEN HAD BEEN ARRESTED WHO APPARENTLY WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR SHOOTING OF CONSTABLES AT CONSULATE ON JAN. 7TH. BOTH WERE ASSOCIATED WITH JLP. THEY HAD BEEN ARRESTED FOR ANOTHER SHOOTING, BUT POLICE DID NOT YET HAVE DIRECT BALLISTICS EVIDENCE THAT THEY WERE INVOLVED IN CONSULATE SHOOTINGS. BLAKE SAID THE TWO MEN WERE ACCUSING EACH OTHER OF HAVING SHOT THE CONSTABLES.

4. BLAKE SAID HE HAD JUST SEEN A PAMPHLET PUT OUT BY WORKERS LIBERATION LEAGUE (WLL) WHICH ACCUSED HIM AND THREE OTHER COLLEAGUES OF CONSPIRING WITH CIA IN AN EFFORT TO OVERTHROW PRESENT GOVERNMENT. BLAKE SAID IT WAS PATENTLY RIDICULOUS AND HE, BLAKE, DID NOT EVEN KNOW "WHO THE CIA MAN IN THE EMBASSY WAS".

5. COMMENT: BLAKE'S STATEMENTS CAN BE CONSIDERED ENCOURAGING IF ONLY FROM STANDPOINT GOJ IS FINALLY FACING UP TO ITS ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. THE FACT IMF IS DEEPLY INVOLVED IS CORROBORATED BY LOCAL REPRESENTATIVE'S "UNAVAILABILITY" THIS WEEK. QUESTION REMAINS WHETHER GOJ CAN POLITICALLY AFFORD TO TAKE NECESSARY ECONOMIC MEASURES.
GERARD

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